

FODO – the Association for Eye Care Providers

The future of primary eye care – Executive summary

Maximising patient, population and health system benefits

Principles and priorities for primary eye care

Our principles

In all that we do, we will work with our members in line with our principles for primary eye care. These are to:

1. Deliver universal access to responsive and safe eye care services.
2. Work in the best interests of patients.
3. Protect and promote patient choice.
4. Support evidence-based innovation.
5. Maintain high-quality eye care infrastructure for the public benefit.

FODO, the Association for Eye Care Providers, is the leading national association for eye care providers working in primary and community care settings across the UK. Each year our members provide over 18 million eye examinations and a wide range of other eye care services. When our members commit to change, we can make change happen.

Our priorities

We will continue to tackle avoidable sight loss by spreading best practice, investing in our workforce, and strengthening interprofessional communications and integrated working. We will advance these goals through our priorities for 2023-2026:

- Protecting and advancing General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) so that all eligible NHS patients can access essential eye care based on clinical need.
- Expanding the range of NHS primary eye care services to meet growing needs, helping reduce pressure on hospitals and GPs.
- Supporting members to provide enhanced eye care services where the NHS fails to commission these, so more patients are able to access these services closer to home.
- Maximising the positive impact of technology and innovation for patients. This includes supporting better, more efficient and standardised IT connectivity between primary and secondary eye care.

- Developing and delivering a progressive and sustainable workforce strategy for primary eye care so patients can always access timely care.
- Ensuring proportionate regulation of eye health services so patients can access safe and effective care while minimising costs for patients, providers and the NHS.

Our route map

FODO members deliver over 18 million eye examinations each year across the UK. When our members commit to change, we can make change happen. With our members, we will continue to lead by example and work with governments and sector partners to achieve the following goals.

Tackle preventable sight loss due to delays in care

We will:

- Work with patient groups and other stakeholders to prevent patients from suffering severe or permanent sight loss because of delays in care at any point in the pathway.

Protect and advance core primary eye care services

We will:

- Protect and support patients by advocating to preserve the Opticians Act and associated regulations and orders unless there is robust evidence for change.
- Continue to protect nationally negotiated GOS systems, including increased fees and grants, as the fairest and most cost-effective means of delivering high-standard first-line eye care in all four UK nations.
- Work with health systems to tackle health inequalities by improving access to eye care for homeless people and people who depend on domiciliary eye care services.

- Support primary eye care providers who wish to continue specialising only in providing world-class sight testing and casefinding, referring patients for further care where appropriate.

Support new models of enhanced primary eye care services

We will:

- Improve patient access by supporting primary eye care providers to expand the range of services they offer to meet patient needs.
- Call on the NHS to fund and commission enhanced services to meet patient needs and to end unwarranted and unjustified variation in access to vital eye care services.

Protect patient benefits and increase patient education

We will:

- Champion patients' rights to choose a provider and evidence based care for themselves and their families.
- Do all we can to protect patient access to affordable eyewear and NHS support for visual correction for the most vulnerable and most in need.
- Continue to work with charities and public health teams to ensure the public understands the importance of eye examinations and looking after their eyes.
- Continue to embrace equality, diversity and inclusion across the sector, including for patients, eye care practitioners, ancillary workers, students and trainees.

Optimise the workforce

We will:

- Continue to work with the GOC, HEIs and sector partners to safely implement the GOC's Education and Training Requirements, including supporting our members to provide high-quality, properly funded training places.

- Work with HEIs and primary care providers to secure a sustainable and inclusive eye care workforce.
- Support and promote opportunities for more optometrists and DOs to fulfil resident roles in practice to help meet the needs of patients with chronic care needs.
- Explore how to accommodate changing working practices, so optometrists and dispensing opticians can meet an increasingly complex and professionally rewarding workload as more patients with complex conditions are managed in primary eye care over time.
- Support optometrists and dispensing opticians to meet growing patient needs with more support from well-trained ophthalmic technicians and optical assistants.

Maximise technology and innovation

We will:

- Embrace and encourage innovation developed by our members and others.
- Liaise with NHS bodies to provide IT development and support to ensure patients and health systems benefit from joined-up, seamless systems and technology.
- Pursue common technical IT standards that maximise benefits and connectivity while minimising costs for providers and the NHS.

What this means

By delivering this route map, we will improve patient and population outcomes across the four nations of the UK by:

- Providing more timely access to enhanced eye care for patients closer to home.
- Reducing hospital waiting times by seeing and managing more patients in primary eye care without hospital referral.
- Preventing avoidable sight loss – including through early identification of the need for sight correction or medical interventions, earlier discharge and better follow-up in the community.
- Improving the efficiency and sustainability of the NHS – minimising costs by avoiding repeat tests and delivering ongoing care management in the community.

- Reducing the carbon footprint of healthcare.
- Improving value for money for the NHS with more eye care delivered for every pound invested.

To make this a reality, we will work with governments, commissioners and planners to ensure that primary eye care is a national priority and that care systems and pathways are designed collaboratively with primary eye care providers and their representatives. In addition, we will deliver the cross-cutting enablers to support the appropriate integration of care.

If you want to join FODO, support our goals or learn more about our health policy work, please email our policy team at healthpolicy@fodo.com.